

John Newton—preacher, hymn-writer, and converted slave-trader—died in December 1807. This lecture aims to show Newton's considerable significance for our own times, and to introduce readers to the man, to his writings, and to those who have written about him.

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# 1807—2007 John Newton and the Twenty-first Century



Tony Baker



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ST ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP

CHARITY LECTURE 2007

1807 – 2007  
JOHN NEWTON AND THE  
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

TONY BAKER

## Preface

When John Newton was Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, he was aware that in the heart of London, as well as outside it, there was a kind of Anglican Evangelical “underworld”,<sup>1</sup> which sought the spread of the Gospel by all possible means, sometimes novel and sometimes maybe irregular.

One approach was to gather together endowed “lectureships” where Evangelicals could freely preach the Word of God. The oldest lectureship was established at St. Antholin’s in the reign of Edward VI (1547-53).<sup>2</sup> Newton often went to assist his friend Henry Foster with the Friday evening lecture there.

Two hundred years later I thank the St. Antholin’s Trustees for the privilege of popping my two little feet into the stalwart shoes of Foster, Newton and many other faithful men. I hope this lecture may show Newton’s considerable significance for our own times, and introduce readers to the man, to his own writings, and to those who have written about him.

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## Introduction

John Newton died 200 years ago on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1807. Fourteen months earlier his pulpit ministry had finally concluded when he preached in St. Mary Woolnoth at a charity service in aid of those injured and bereaved through the Battle of Trafalgar. His memory, as well as his sight and hearing, had now almost gone – although even when over 80, “it was remarked” says Josiah Bull “he was nowhere more collected or more lively than in the pulpit”.<sup>3</sup> But on this final occasion as the elderly Newton more or less wandered to a halt, his curate had to remind him what he was preaching about.

In an extraordinary way, Newton's ministry had come full circle. It was almost half a century earlier in September 1758 that he had preached his first sermon in the Presbyterian church in Leeds. In spite of initial hesitancy in accepting the invitation, when offered a room for quiet and final preparation after tea, he responded “O I am prepared”. His text was Psalm 16:8 (“I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved”). However, perhaps there was an element of over-confidence and he had not in fact set the Lord quite so definitely before him, for he simply dried up and had to move out of the pulpit! John Edwards, the minister, took over with an appropriate address on the Spirit's help in our weakness.

This is what Newton experienced down the years that followed. The amazing grace that saved him also called and equipped him for ministry, enabling him to proclaim and practise the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. “Newton's whole ministry” says Alec Motyer, “bore the marks so evident in his lovely hymns: it was

consistently *biblical* (to share the Word of God), *spiritual* (to promote walking with God), *simple* (to make biblical truth and principles plain), and *practical* (to inculcate personal holiness and sound relationships in church and society).<sup>4</sup> One of Newton's more recent biographers, Brian Edwards, summarizes Newton's ongoing significance: "The flame of his example as a Christian, husband, preacher, correspondent, counsellor and hymn-writer has never dimmed, even two hundred years after his death."<sup>5</sup>

What Brian Edwards says expresses the aim of this lecture: rather than simply retelling Newton's story, it is to show his significance in ten areas for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, in summary form Newton's biography can appear deceptively straightforward: born on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1725, Newton had a godly mother who died just before he was seven. He had only two years formal education. He then gradually rejected his Christian roots but God met with him during a storm at sea in March 1748. There were four further voyages on slave-ships (one as First Mate, three as Captain). Between the first and second, he married a distant relative, Mary (Polly) Catlett, whom he had first met when he was seventeen and she was thirteen. After some years as Tide Surveyor at Liverpool, he was ordained as curate to an absentee vicar at Olney in Bucks in 1764, later becoming Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in 1779.

To see the biographical bones fleshed out with high drama at sea, tear-jerking romance, and a developing "all-round" ministry, read one or more of the biographies, from the first by Richard Cecil (1808) to the latest by Jonathan Aitken (2007). But begin if possible with Newton's own *Authentic Narrative* of his early life, published in 1764.

To read this is to be confronted immediately with the first reason for Newton's continuing significance for our own century:

## I. Newton's conversion

It was Newton's contention that some conversions are so ordered that "sovereign, efficacious grace" (Newton's phrase<sup>6</sup>) is particularly evident:

... the wise and good providence of God watches over his people from the earliest moment of their life, over-rules and guards them through all their wanderings in a state of ignorance, leads them in a way they know not, till at length his providence and grace concur in those events and impressions, which bring them to the knowledge of him and themselves.

... The outward circumstances of many have been uniform: they have known but little variety in life: and with respect to their inward change, it has been effected in a secret way, unnoticed by others, and almost unperceived by themselves. The Lord has spoken to them, not in thunder and tempest, but with a still small voice he has drawn them gradually to himself; so that, though they have a happy assurance of the thing, that they know and love him, and are passed from death unto life; yet of the precise time and manner, they can give little account. Others he seems to select, in order to shew the exceeding riches of his grace, and the greatness of his mighty power: he suffers the natural rebellion and wickedness of their hearts to have full scope; while sinners of less note are cut off with little warning, these are spared, though sinning with a high hand, and, as it were, studying their own destruction. At length, when all that knew them are perhaps expecting to hear, that they are made signal instances of divine vengeance, the Lord (whose thoughts are high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) is

pleased to pluck them as brands out of the fire, and to make them monuments of his mercy, for the encouragement of others; they are, beyond expectation, convinced, pardoned, and changed. A case of this sort indicates a divine power no less than the creation of a world: it is evidently the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in the eyes of all those, who are not blinded by prejudice and unbelief.<sup>7</sup>

Newton cites the example of Saul of Tarsus, to which we might well add Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33). Essentially, coming to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is always the same: the sovereign regenerating work of the Spirit (see Titus 3:5 ESV) which draws forth the human response shown in conversion.

Following the early death of his mother and the swift remarriage of his somewhat aloof and severe father, Newton had not immediately thrown Elizabeth Newton's Christian faith overboard (so to speak) when first taken to sea by his father at the age of eleven. Indeed, "I took up and laid aside a religious profession three or four different times before I was sixteen ... but I loved sin and was unwilling to forsake it".<sup>8</sup> His religion, unlike his mother's, was at this stage never vital. A temporary reformation is not the same as spiritual regeneration and repentance. Newton's spiritual journey teaches us caution: his superficial religion fell away, and was replaced by profanity, blasphemy and immorality. Conscience vanished: "I was possessed of so strong a spirit of delusion, that I believed my own lie, and was firmly persuaded that after death I should cease to be".<sup>9</sup> In the mid eighteenth century, as in the twenty-first, atheism and annihilationism are very convenient beliefs.

After his remarkable rescue from the West African coast in February 1747 where he had become "servant of slaves" (his own description in his epitaph), his conscience

was awakened during a very severe storm on board the "Greyhound" in March 1748, and he started to pray, a key sign of the conversion of both Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, and to read the New Testament. By the time – against all human odds – the ship limped into Lough Swilly on the west coast of Ireland, Newton says "I saw God might declare not his mercy only, but his justice also, in the pardon of sin, on the account of the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ. I stood in need of an Almighty Saviour, and such a one I found described in the New Testament".<sup>10</sup>

Newton's conversion is a great encouragement to keep praying for even cynical unbelievers – and to pray that on occasions there may be dramatic conversions in a way that exalts and proclaims the sovereign grace of God. It is an encouragement for every parent and grandparent to pray and keep praying for their children: Newton clearly remembered his mother – surely an eighteenth century Hannah – praying with tears over his infant head. She taught him the Shorter Catechism and, above all, Scriptures which the Holy Spirit brought to mind in his hour of need. No wonder Newton was so keen on teaching the Gospel to the children of Olney every Thursday afternoon, before even the Sunday School movement associated with Robert Raikes clearly got under way.<sup>11</sup> Midweek or after school clubs (as we now call them) meeting on similar lines are wisely renewing a Newton innovation.

But, wonderful though Newton's encounter with God had been, the years that follow are a reminder of the indispensable need to receive God's Word proclaimed, taught and shared by other believers. This he lacked: "I had no Christian friend or faithful minister to advise me ... I was not brought in the way of evangelical preaching or conversation (except a few times ...) for six years after this period".<sup>12</sup>

As First Mate on board the slaver "Brownlow" (1748-9), he backslid: prayer and Bible reading slipped. "The enemy" said Newton, "prepared a train of temptations and I became his easy prey; and, for about a month, he lulled me asleep in a course of evil ..." <sup>13</sup> – including, it seems, raping some of the female slaves on board the "Brownlow". Severe fever was used to restore him to his spiritual senses. "From that time, I trust, I have been delivered from the power and dominion of sin: though as to the effects and conflicts of sin dwelling in me, I still 'groan, being burdened'". <sup>14</sup>

It was not until 1754 that Newton met a committed, instructed captain, Alexander Clunie at St. Kitts, who disciplined him: "I received an increase of knowledge; my conceptions became clearer and more evangelical ... I began to understand the security of the covenant of grace". <sup>15</sup> The need for 21<sup>st</sup> century Clunies to be active for Christ in every area is undiminished. What would have happened to Newton if Clunie's Independent congregation in Stepney had told him that the navy was no place for a spiritual man? One wonders if Newton finding Clunie in the right place at the right time was one factor that years later led to his encouraging the newly converted Wilberforce to stay in Parliament?

## 2. Newton's theology

It was with his heart freshly warmed and his mind newly alerted by Clunie's instruction in the Word of God that Newton began to find much more of a framework to his Christian faith. We need to realise that he already had a profound awareness of God's sovereign and merciful providence, through his own experience of saving grace. He had known that providence remarkably preserving his life on

many extraordinary occasions: his rescue from the West African coast depended on split second timing as the vessel captained by the man Newton's father had asked to look for his son, passed by Kittam. Later as the "Greyhound" lurched in the storm of March 1748, Newton was within a hair's breadth of being washed overboard. Staying in Londonderry while the "Greyhound" was refitted, he managed almost to kill himself in a shooting accident: "My fowling-piece ... went off so near my face, as to burn away the corner of my hat". <sup>16</sup>

Five years before these events he had experienced in God's providence an extraordinary dream that spoke of God's knowledge of what lay ahead. It concerned a ring symbolizing the mercy of God which Newton in his dream threw away, but which he was assured could be restored to him. Newton's view of such "monitory and supernatural dreams" was that, although he never encouraged any Christian to seek such occurrences "those who are acquainted with the history and experience of the people of God are well assured, that such intimations have not been totally withheld in any period down to the present time". <sup>17</sup>

Newton therefore already had a deep awareness of God as both truly sovereign and irresistibly gracious when he encountered again the Old Dissent Calvinistic theology of his mother and early childhood. By the end of 1754 Newton reckoned himself theologically a Calvinist: "I should have much to answer for had I invented it myself or taken it upon trust from Calvin" he wrote later "but as I find it in the Scripture I cheerfully embrace it". <sup>18</sup>

Soon after, Newton became much more aware of the Revival and the whole Methodist movement, and before long "Whitefield fast became Newton's supreme ideal". <sup>19</sup> The Calvinistic wing of Methodism shared Old Dissent's theology, but was more aware of the eighteenth than the seventeenth

century: it was in no sense antiquarian. It quarried the Puritan mines, but was too busy preaching the Gospel and discipling new believers to spend all day down them, or to write with the prolixity of an Owen, Gurnall or Charnock.

Newton's own eclectic reading thus included Calvin's Institutes, the Puritans Baxter, Owen, Leighton, and Flavel (an especially pastoral Puritan and a special favourite), as well as Reformed contemporaries such as Watts, Doddridge and the Erskines.

Newton's Calvinism was a pastoral Calvinism (as shown in Flavel's ministry) and an evangelistic Calvinism as winsomely seen and powerfully heard in Whitefield. It was (in the seventeenth and eighteenth century sense of the word) an "experimental" Calvinism. So when Newton described himself as a "moderate Calvinist", he was referring to the eirenic way he sought to hold his beliefs, rather than being lukewarm about his Reformed theological convictions. He sought to recognise the goodness and grace of God wherever he found it – in John Wesley, for example, though he differed from him, not surprisingly, on a number of doctrinal issues. Of any minister who was essentially orthodox but for some reason did not identify entirely with "Mr N" (as Richard Cecil called him), he would say "let him alone: he that is not against us is on our side. Make no man an offender for a word. He is doing good according to his views. Let us pray for him, and by no means weaken his hands. Who knows but God may one day put him far above our heads, both in knowledge and usefulness".<sup>20</sup>

Again, Newton said:

... though a man does not accord with my views of election, yet if he gives me good evidence that *he is effectually called of God*, he is my brother; though he seems afraid of the doctrine of final perseverance; yet, if grace enables him to

persevere, he is my brother still. If he loves Jesus, I will love him, whatever hard name he may be called by, and whatever incidental mistakes I may think he holds. His differing from me will not always prove him to be wrong, except I am infallible myself.<sup>21</sup>

We should not minimize Newton's theological acumen: he was increasingly suspicious of theological systematizing which went beyond Scripture, and successfully weaned John Ryland Jr. from the High (we would say "hyper") Calvinism and supralapsarianism prevalent in some Baptist circles, which produced acute spiritual introspection and cut the nerve of the free offer of the Gospel.

In content, style and spirit here is theology for today. Our evangelical colleges need those who will teach it, live it and show how to apply it wisely and pastorally.

### 3. Newton's call to the ministry and attitude to denominations

Initially, Newton was so tongue-tied in public speaking that he assumed that he was not called to full-time ministry. However, as he continued to share his testimony, he became an increasingly articulate and attractive speaker. In 1758, friends in Yorkshire suggested ordination. "My first thought was to join the Dissenters" Newton wrote,<sup>22</sup> amongst whom he had by now frequently ministered. This is important to note, for never in his life did Newton show any prejudice against their ministers or congregations. Many such nonconformist ministers were his close friends – for example, William Jay, who ministered in Bath from 1789-1853 and who said of Newton: "I deem Mr Newton the most perfect instance of the spirit and temper of Christianity I ever knew ..."<sup>23</sup>

Early on, in Liverpool, in a rare anonymous pamphlet, *Some thoughts on the Advantages and Expediency of Religious Associations*,<sup>24</sup> Newton argued against “the unhappy prevalence of a spirit of bigotry on all sides; an undue attachment to systems and denominations, or a fondness for our own experiences.” Rather, he argued for associations where “we are led into a clear acquaintance with the work of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of the divine life ... when ... we observe with wonder and delight, that it is the same God that worketh all in all in his children, amidst the great variety of talents, tempers, dispositions and circumstances he has assigned them”.

In a day when boundaries between Anglicans and Dissenters, between Independents and Presbyterians and Methodists could be high, to Newton they were very low. He believed each minister or church member should be where God wanted him to be, and that they should work together for the Gospel. He would undoubtedly have rejoiced in conferences, training courses and church planting across the denominations today.

But we jump ahead: Newton took his possible call to the ministry with extreme seriousness. Between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> August 1758 (his 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday) he wrote down his “Miscellaneous Thoughts and enquiries on an important subject”.<sup>25</sup> The contents are most significant and reveal how much he had grown in the four years since he had met George Alexander Clunie and in the three since he had met George Whitefield. “I am willing” wrote Newton “to take the apostle’s resolution to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, that I may declare his unsearchable riches to sinners”.<sup>26</sup> He clearly saw the ministerial calling as one of proclaiming and teaching the Word of God.

Newton goes on to speak of “the necessity of divine assistance ... To enable a person to preach the Gospel with *purity*, free from essential errors, *propriety* according to the state and circumstances of the audience and with *power* so as to be able to enforce his message and to give evidence that it is indeed the Word of God”.<sup>27</sup> In the final section, written on his birthday, he said:

It is my prayer that I may not be permitted to keep back any part of the counsel of God. Yet I resolve and would endeavour always to bear in mind the Scripture distinction of babes and men, milk and strong meat, and remember the practice of my Dear Lord and Master who taught his disciples as they were able to bear.<sup>28</sup>

For Newton, “the three great branches of divine truth” were

1. The Doctrine of Jesus Christ crucified ...
2. The great doctrine of love which is the life and soul of the Gospel, and which seems too much to be left unnoticed amidst the general strife there is for and against other doctrines;
3. The doctrine, or rather, the practice of Gospel holiness.<sup>29</sup>

The whole of *Miscellaneous Thoughts*, which makes no more than a booklet of thirty-two pages, is a largely unknown gem which could continue to fire the hearts of those moving towards ordination today.

From then on, Newton knew ministry was right for him – and in the Church of England (though he was offered Independent charges in 1759-60). Henry Crook, Vicar of Hunslett “moderated my scruples” and offered him a curacy.<sup>30</sup> There is no doubt that Newton saw the Church of England as “the best boat to fish from” (although he did not use that phrase!) and he spoke even in 1764 of “preferring the established church in some other respects”.<sup>31</sup>

One might have thought that, on interview, any bishop would have been glad to ordain a man with Newton's spiritual experience, now evident gifts and clear potential. However, the Bishop of Chester ("rich and proud" – so Pollock<sup>23</sup>) simply forwarded him to the Archbishop of York ("elderly, idle" – so Pollock<sup>23</sup>), who did not want to meet him. Those tainted with Methodism were scarcely welcome ordination candidates, as (it has been alleged) conservative evangelicals are not always welcome today. It was not till 29<sup>th</sup> April 1764, after tortuous twists and turns, that Newton was finally ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln through the influence of the evangelical Earl of Dartmouth, sometime President of the Board of Trade and Colonial Secretary. The lesson is still that, if God is indeed calling to preaching and pastoral ministry, keep prayerfully pushing every door, and do not despise those in high places who can pull strings!

Twenty years later, Newton wrote four letters to the minister of an Independent church as an apology for his serving in the Church of England. Anglican Evangelical ministers who wish to explain their denominational allegiance today to free church friends could well find their arguments strengthened by reading it. Negatively, Newton found disputes amongst the Independents unattractive; and he found the Regulative Principle impossible to implement. He was also unconvinced by Baptist distinctives. However, says Newton, he can exercise a Gospel ministry with liberty in the Church of England, and he says "I approve of parochial order". Of the Book of Common Prayer he writes "I approve the service and therefore it is no burden to me to use it". I do not know that we could always echo his comment "I have reason to acknowledge that the administration of our church government is gentle and liberal" (sadly, today it is sometimes liberal in another sense!). "Indeed," Newton

continues "I have often thought I have as good a right to the name of Independent as yourself".<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Newton's preaching and praying

(I link these, as for Newton they were two sides of the one coin).

People flocked to hear Newton when he settled in Olney and later at St. Mary Woolnoth. Yet we cannot call him one of the really great preachers of the church, either because of fresh insight into the Word or because of an outstanding delivery. Whitefield was his hero, but Newton must have known he could never preach quite like him, and that he would be wiser not to try.

Under God, Newton was his own man, and God honoured that. In his first winter at Olney he wrote to Alex Clunie: "Neither short days, uncertain weather or dirty roads make any considerable diminution in our assemblies, and their attention and seriousness give me hope they do not all come in vain".<sup>35</sup>

What then were his strengths? Newton sought always to expound and apply the Scriptures as the Word of God, and to glorify Christ. "Effect, I believe has been produced in my preaching by a solemn determination to bring forth Jesus Christ as the great subject in all my discourses".<sup>36</sup> He sought "to break a hard heart, and to heal a broken heart".<sup>37</sup> Newton said in a letter to a friend in America, Dr Robbins, that his aims were:

First, to set forth the glory and grace of God in the person of the Saviour. Second, to show the danger and folly of a form of godliness without the power, of a mere talking, speculative profession. Third, to persuade, if possible, those that love

the Lord Jesus Christ to love one another, to lay much stress upon the things in which we are agreed, and but little upon those in which we differ.<sup>38</sup>

It was because Newton wanted to be both irenic and effective that he preached his Calvinism as he did. William Jay records a breakfast conversation with a "high" (or "hyper") Calvinist who was querying Newton's doctrinal credentials, and who, says Jay "required some moderating":

"I am more of a Calvinist than anything else: but I use my Calvinism in my writings and my preaching as I use this sugar" – taking a lump, and putting it into his tea-cup, and stirring it, adding, "I do not give it alone, and whole; but mixed, and diluted."<sup>39</sup>

"So," says John Piper, "Newton did not serve up the 'five points' by themselves, but blended them in with everything he taught. This way of flavouring life was essential to his pattern of tenderness that developed in dealing with people's doctrinal differences."<sup>40</sup>

Of Newton's preaching in London, Brian Edwards writes: "Newton continued to preach, as he had always done, not to create dissension, but for disseminating the truth. He aimed to lead his hearers to a deeper knowledge of, and personal relationship to, the Son of God, and to live a life of faith in him. Consequently John avoided issues that were not essential but would only antagonize ... However, it must not be imagined that Newton sat loosely to vital doctrine"<sup>41</sup>.

His preaching was practical; he was down to earth; he could illustrate from his own experience (not least when preaching the Book of Jonah!). He did not preach over long (not more than an hour!). He communicated love for the Lord Jesus and love for his hearers.

Newton had his weaknesses. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of his appreciative hearers, Richard Cecil says "His utterance was far from clear, and his attitudes ungraceful". Was Cecil referring to diction and mannerisms? But who was really bothered, even at St. Mary Woolnoth, that their minister did not have the polish or sophistication of many of the preachers of the day? Newton's preaching was real preaching by a man whose university had been on the high seas and as "a servant of slaves" on the west coast of Africa.

However, two particular charges must be faced. One is that in desiring to be "patient, tender-hearted, non-controversial" (so Piper) he failed to attack error as he should have done. But Piper concludes that pastors "cannot be faulted that they mainly have flocks to love and hearts to change. Defending the truth is a crucial part of that, but it is not the main part. *Holding* the truth and *permeating* all our ministry with the greatness and sweetness of truth for the transformation of our people's lives is the main part of our ministry."<sup>42</sup>

The other charge relates to Newton's extempore preaching. In spite of the experience of his first sermon, he went back to this to give him more freedom in delivery, and more eye-contact with his hearers. By extempore is meant his lack of notes in the pulpit – but certainly in Olney years he filled notebooks with his advance preparation. I think we have to admit that as life wore on and in London pressures increased, and as eyesight weakened, fresh detailed preparation in advance decreased.

I am not excusing this, but because Newton was full of the Word and of the Spirit, and had over the years studied it and meditated upon it so fully, faithfully and fruitfully, God continued greatly to use and own his preaching ministry. True, he had admitted in 1766 "coldness in prayer and

darkness and formality in reading the Word are almost my continual burden",<sup>43</sup> but who has not known such battles? The sign of true life is that such times bother us. Hundreds owed their conversion to him, and the Lord's strength was perfected in his servant's weakness.

Read Newton's preaching for yourself: for example, the fifty sermons based on the texts used in Handel's *Messiah*;<sup>44</sup> or, very accessibly, in the previously unpublished material from his sermon preparation notebooks in *365 Days with John Newton*.<sup>45</sup> You will not be disappointed, and may well find yourself praying for preachers in our century with the knowledge and application of the Word, with the Christ-centredness, and with the experience of life that marks his ministry.

My comments about Newton and prayer are much briefer, but this is not because it was unimportant to him. Josiah Bull asks "What ... was the great secret of Mr Newton's power and steadfastness?" He answers: "unquestionably it was his *spirit of prayer*. From the commencement of his religious history we find him cultivating this holy habit."<sup>46</sup> Newton wrote to "a Student in Divinity":

The chief means for attaining wisdom ... are the holy Scriptures and prayer. The one is the fountain of living water, the other the bucket with which we are to draw. And I believe you will find that the man who is most frequent and fervent in prayer, and most devoted to the Word of God, will shine and flourish above his fellows.<sup>47</sup>

Read Hindmarsh<sup>48</sup> for invaluable insight into Newton's prayer and communion with God.

It is not surprising that this priority was reflected in church life. In 1765 in Olney Newton began regular prayer meetings: he selected those who would pray, but he was

delighted when he could add another name to his list of extempore pray-ers. He must have been delighted too that other lay-initiated prayer meetings sprang up at Olney – one at 6am on Sunday to pray for Newton and the services; one amongst young people; and one "on account of the present appearances of the times".<sup>49</sup>

The priority of prayer, with the priority of the Word, must be kept right at the centre for every minister, every believer, and every church in every century.

## 5. Newton's pastoral and evangelistic work

All things being equal, Newton at Olney studied, prepared and wrote in the mornings and visited in the afternoons. His visits were of course always pastoral in intent. To such pastoral visits he aimed to add Baxter's Kidderminster pattern of spending an hour with each member of the congregation as a time for spiritual check-up and encouragement.<sup>50</sup>

Newton came across as warm, genuine, caring, accepting, and of course discerning. He was certainly not formal in either dress or manner. William Cole, from the same archdeaconry as Newton, described him as "a little odd-looking man of the Methodistical order, and without any clerical habit" (i.e. dress).<sup>51</sup> Evidently evangelicals in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not the first to start dispensing with the accoutrements of clericalism! We should take courage from his example. Nor was Newton an advocate of clerical exclusivism. He involved others in visiting the sick and needy – like Richard Stamford, one of his early converts;<sup>52</sup> and Betty Abraham (d.1774) was what we would call an honorary "pastoral assistant", a "Mother in Israel ... exceedingly useful, especially to the lambs of the flock".

However, Newton's encouragement of leadership in different spheres – unusual for the times in the Church of England – did lead to a loss of ministerial authority and to tensions in the church and beyond, which contributed to his leaving Olney. But surely it was a risk it was right to take.

I want to comment also on Newton's detailed and invaluable pastoral ministry to those who were to have a wider influence. First is Thomas Scott, curate-in-charge of Ravenstone and Weston Underwood, who was chagrined by Newton visiting dying parishioners, whom Scott had neglected. Doctrinally, Scott "was the opposite of all that evangelicalism stood for".<sup>53</sup> He was in the ministry to earn a living and hopefully become a literary man. He was ordained in 1772 with he says, "a heart full of pride and wickedness: my life polluted with many unrepented, unforsaken sins".<sup>54</sup> Convinced of his theological correctness ("I was nearly a Socinian and Pelagian, and wholly an Arminian"<sup>55</sup>), he spoiled for a fight with Newton.

An initial discussion at a clergy meeting was handled with great wisdom by Newton, who refused to be confrontational in public, but sent him a note and a book – and prayed. More letters followed, with Newton seeing as his priority building up the friendship but dropping hints about the nature of and need for true faith. Scott's reading began to take him in a more orthodox direction. After a gap of fifteen months, friendship was resumed and Scott started attending Newton's lectures. Slowly, gradually "I began ... to perceive our Lord's meaning when he says 'except ye receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein'".<sup>56</sup> Scott was won by friendship, earnest prayer, and by the right word at the right time, with Newton convinced that the Lord was at work. Scott became a noted preacher and commentator.<sup>57</sup>

The second example is the famous friendship with William Cowper, the poet. A highly strung depressive, bullied at boarding school, he had like Newton lost his mother when he was six. But, unlike Newton, he was not allowed to marry the woman he loved, his cousin Theodora. Overwhelmed finally by the pressures of his work in the House of Lords, he had a bad breakdown. While in hospital, he was converted mainly through his cousin, Martin Madan. Later, he moved to Olney, cared for by a clergyman's widow, Mary Unwin.

Cowper and Newton became firm friends. Newton drew the best out of Cowper, especially his poetic and hymn writing gifts. Cowper was involved in sick visiting and leading church prayer meetings, but his mental illness returned and he attempted suicide. Although in large measure he recovered, a sense of rejection by God never left him.

Newton showed to Cowper true Christian love, friendship and support, and shared with him the grace of the Gospel. But to be on the receiving end of such ministry is no necessary guarantee against mental illness. Newton has been blamed for this by many – including Lord David Cecil in his 1930 biography of Cowper, *The Stricken Deer*, which openly despises Newton and all that he stood for. Of Cowper's mental state, Cecil says "Of course, it was partly the fault of the evangelical creed, which ... made an emotional condition into a moral virtue."<sup>58</sup> This is answered in the study on Cowper by Dr Gaius Davies, who speaks of "the immense credit Newton deserves".<sup>59</sup> Cowper himself said of Newton "a sincerer or more affectionate friend no man ever had".<sup>60</sup>

The third example is that of Hannah More, who arrived in London in 1773 at the age of twenty-eight as successful playwright and poet. She was one of five sisters

who had started a girls' boarding school in Bristol. Mixing with the mighty in London (including Dr Johnson and David Garrick) failed to satisfy her any more than her conventional religion.

However, encounters with Thornton and Wilberforce of the Clapham Sect impressed her with their zeal. A copy of Newton's *Cardiphonia* both gave her a spiritual hunger and pointed to how it could be satisfied. In response to her letter to Newton, Newton offered spiritual counsel and Christian friendship. Newton's letters were supplemented by visits from him and Wilberforce. Rather than force the spiritual pace, Newton trusted (as with Scott) the Holy Spirit to be about his work. Encouraging her to seek the Lord, he identified with her by saying "I have stood upon that ground myself".<sup>61</sup> Hannah More was converted, and her Christian educational work and her writing, including popular Christian tracts for the poor and downtrodden had far-reaching influence for the Gospel.

Newton remains not only an example for our day of a conscientious pastor in the Baxter tradition (though he never saw as much fruit at Olney as Baxter at Kidderminster), but of one who was led alongside those whose gifts and service would in turn have a wide impact. We need to be praying that Newton will have his successors in this sphere today.

## 6. Newton's letter-writing

Newton's letters are one of two areas where he is chiefly remembered, although, as we are seeing, he was under God a man of many parts. We have noted already his ministry of letter-writing to Thomas Scott and Hannah More. Newton's use of letters for pastoral counselling fitted the eighteenth

century way of life, when the development of the post office, as well as a more relaxed English prose style, made letters increasingly significant for both general and spiritual communication. It was the chief way evangelicals "networked" – hence the significance of Wesley's and Whitefield's correspondence. But it was Newton who made letter-writing such a significant conduit of spiritual advice. He was, says Hindmarsh, "the gentle casuist of the Revival";<sup>62</sup> and says G. R. Balleine "the St. Francis de Sales of the evangelical movement, the great spiritual director of souls through the post".<sup>63</sup> The six volume *Works* contain the main collections by *Omicron* and *Vigil*, *Cardiphonia*, *Letters to a Wife* and a *Sequel to Cardiphonia*; but there are very many more. Newton saw it as a priority: "it is the Lord's will I should do most by my letters".<sup>64</sup>

Running one's eye down the subjects covered by *Omicron* indicates their range, e.g. "on the inward witness to the ground and reality of faith", "on the doctrines of Election and Final Perseverance", "on Union with Christ", "of the Lord's promised Guidance". "Such gentle sympathy, combined with such sturdy commonsense, made him a friend in whom it was indeed good to confide".<sup>65</sup> The letters were popularised Puritan theology – equally experimental but appropriate to Newton's ministry.

Of particular interest are Letters X, XI, and XII from the *Omicron* selection, which Hindmarsh adds to the *Authentic Narrative* in his *Life and Spirituality of John Newton*.<sup>66</sup> "I sit down to give you my general views of a progressive work of grace, in the several stages of a believer's experience" wrote Newton to John Thornton. "It will be needful ... to set aside such things as may be personal and occasional ... and to collect those only which, in a greater or less degree, are common to them all".

Newton summarized the three stages he observed from Scripture and experience as “A: Grace in the Blade”; “B: Grace in the Ear” and “C: Grace in the Full Corn in the Ear”, drawing the imagery from Mark 4:28. Hindmarsh’s four page introduction is as worth reading as the Letters. “A” says Hindmarsh, is “characterised by *desire* and ... sharp feelings of contrition and spiritual comfort and longing”. In “B”, “conflict is the dominating characteristic”. In “C”, “his or her will is united to the will of God so far as is possible in this life”.<sup>67</sup> Hindmarsh says of this outline of pastoral theology “Its genius was its simplicity”,<sup>68</sup> and adds “it is a unique contribution to evangelical theology”.<sup>69</sup>

Moving from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, it is clearly an often neglected key to pastoral ministry to understand spiritual development with Newton’s spiritual perceptiveness. Further, is the letter format outmoded as many assume? May there not be value in ministers still producing focussed pastoral letters for their congregations (remember Newton’s Letters were often written with an eye to later publication)? The congregational letter was developed by William Still and other evangelical ministers in the Church of Scotland in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>70</sup> The individual pastoral letter was a key element in the extraordinary ministry of the Rev. E. J. H. Nash (“Bash”) (1898-1982).<sup>71</sup> His letter-writing was a key part of discipling public schoolboys who had been helped spiritually at his camps. John Stott wrote: “I do not know any Christian leader of modern days who shared, as he did, the apostle Paul’s convictions of the value of letter-writing”.<sup>72</sup> I do not think that the style of Mr N and of Bash would have been very similar; but they wrote of the same Lord and under the authority of the same Scriptures. It encourages us to

wonder whether there may indeed be a future for a letter-writing ministry in some shape or form.

## 7. Newton’s hymns<sup>73</sup>

The eighteenth century was also the key time for the writing, development and use of hymns amongst evangelicals as the Awakening spread. Isaac Watts was the first significant figure, and his hymns would have been familiar to Newton from his early background in Old Dissent, a background he picked up again (as we have seen) in the early years of his own spiritual awakening.

Not all evangelicals approved of introducing hymns in addition to the metrical Psalms: William Romaine (1714-95), for example, of St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, said of his exclusive Psalm-singing policy: “This should silence every objection – It is the Word of God”.<sup>74</sup> However, it did not silence every objection: Newton and many others could see no intrinsic difficulty with hymn-singing.

He started writing them – sometimes at the rate of almost one a week – when he went to Olney, although chiefly for non-liturgical prayer meetings. For Newton, there was the closest of links between hymns and the Word of God. Robin Leaver writes:

Most of Newton’s hymns are linked with his preaching ... Either the hymn grew out of the Biblical text or subject he was preaching on, or his sermon grew out of the hymn he had written.<sup>75</sup>

For example, the celebrated *Amazing Grace* was almost certainly written for Newton’s New Year sermon in 1773 on 1 Chronicles 17:16-17.<sup>76</sup> Others were written with a sharp eye to

the contemporary scene – e.g. “On the commencement of hostilities in America” in 1775.<sup>77</sup>

Newton wrote in no detached way, but conscious of his own spiritual experience and that of others. He is the representative “I” in many of the hymns.

As the workings of the heart of man, and of the Spirit of God, are in general the same, in all who are the subjects of grace, I hope most of the hymns, being the fruit and expression of my own experience, will coincide with the views of real Christians of all denominations.<sup>78</sup>

That is why one whole section (Book 3) of *Olney Hymns* is devoted to “the Rise, Progress, Changes and Comforts of the Spiritual Life”. Newton thus aimed to be both biblical and “experimental”.

Further, Newton wrote conscious of his unsophisticated parishioners who would first sing them. His hymns are

for the use of plain people. Perspicuity, simplicity and ease, should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and colouring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly and with great judgement.<sup>79</sup>

Hindmarsh is right in saying “Newton saw himself as a journeyman in the trade ... a skilled versifier, not a sophisticated poet”<sup>80</sup>. Newton’s aims and principles guide us to a correct evaluation of his hymns. Of course, with such a number they are variable as verse; but there is nothing wrong with doggerel (understood as simple rhyming verse), and some are that, if it is good doggerel and achieves its purpose. Another outstanding example is found in Bunyan’s verse in *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

What is remarkable is that so many of Newton’s hymns are of such very high quality in terms of wording,

theology and the sense of personal involvement. *How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, One there is above all others, Day of judgement, day of wonders, Glorious things of Thee are spoken, Approach, my soul, the mercy seat, are a few amongst the large number which appear in twentieth century hymn books.* Such hymns place Newton, with his near contemporaries Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley as surely amongst the greatest hymn writers.

Today, the principles that guided Newton are equally indispensable for twenty-first century hymn and song writers. We are also foolish beyond measure if we see the hymns of Newton and other great hymn writers of the past as simply “golden oldies” to be only occasionally taken from the shelf and dusted down (*Amazing Grace* being the almost too frequent exception!).

## 8. Newton’s attitude to the slave trade

Some may be surprised that it is only now that this subject is introduced, but this is where it belongs. The fact is that Newton did not begin his four voyages as a slave-trader (one as First Mate and three as Captain) until after God had met with him in the great storm while on the “Greyhound” in March 1748.

The fact also is that slave-trading and slavery was an almost complete blind spot amongst Europeans at this stage: this included most committed Christians, some Quakers excepted. It was almost universally viewed as economically essential, and it is feared that most Europeans scarcely thought of Africans as their equals as human beings. Tragically, as we know, Africans were also ready to enslave fellow Africans and to aid Europeans to do the same. As we

shall see, when we jump to the twenty-first century, blind spots can be very blind indeed.

It would be thirty to forty years before Hannah More wrote with reference to *Rule Britannia*:

Cease, ye British Sons of murder!  
Ye that boast 'ye rule the waves'  
Cease from forging Afric's chain,  
Bid no slave ship soil the sea,  
Mock your Saviour's name no further,  
Ye that 'never will be slaves',  
Cease you savage lust of gain.  
Bid poor Afric's land be free.<sup>81</sup>

From 1748-1754, when involved in the slave trade, Newton's own spiritual light, let alone knowledge of God's Word, was limited. He did not meet Clunie, who was not a slave-trader, until almost at the end of his slave trading career. He certainly endeavoured to make conditions less inhumane than on many other ships. Nor was Newton wrong to write of his consciousness of the providential hand of God closely on him personally even while slaves suffered and died in the holds below. Amazing saving grace draws alongside us in Jesus as we are and where we are, and insists on loving us as that grace gradually begins to change us into the likeness of the one who himself became a slave.

There are indications Newton's conscience was troubled earlier than some suppose. Ten years after he left the slave trade, he wrote in the *Authentic Narrative* in 1764:

During the time I was engaged in the slave trade, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was, upon the whole, satisfied with it, as the appointment Providence had marked out for me ... I considered myself as a sort of gaoler or turnkey; and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts, and

shackles. In this view I had often petitioned, that the Lord, in his own time, would be pleased to fix me in a more humane calling ...<sup>82</sup>

This indicates that by or before 1764 he *was* having scruples. None of this is to excuse Newton, but it is to set him in the context of his times.

Eventually, in 1784, in his poem *The Task* Cowper denounced slavery, clearly with Newton's approval:

Here's padlocks and bolts, and screws for the thumbs,  
That squeeze them so lovingly till the blood comes,  
They sweeten the temper like comfits or plums  
Which nobody can deny.<sup>83</sup>

The following year, the twenty-six year old spiritually searching William Wilberforce, sought "some serious conversation" with the man he remembered as his boyhood hero and referred to as "Old Newton". Newton not only spoke of the Gospel, but crucially "urged him not to cut himself from his present circles or to retire from public life".<sup>84</sup> Wilberforce heeded all the advice he was given.

As he grew as a Christian, and as his campaign against the slave trade got under way, Wilberforce stayed in close contact with Newton and Hannah More. In 1788 Newton's *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* was published.<sup>85</sup> It is a cogently argued tract depicting the horrors of the trade for black people, and its dehumanising effect on the whites. He concludes that the slave trade is "a commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive".<sup>86</sup>

Newton both discipled Wilberforce as a believer and encouraged him in his campaign by his letters to him. These letters to Wilberforce and his wife total 79 and were written between 1785 and 1804.<sup>87</sup> They must have been a continuing

source of stimulus and encouragement to Wilberforce in the opposition he faced:

Oh, my Dear Sir, how much do you owe to the mercy and grace, which snatched you out of that whirlpool in which so many are daily swallowed up! My heart congratulates you. May the Lord be your sun and shield, make you as a watered garden yourself and a spring of water for the benefit of many.<sup>88</sup>

No wonder Newton was a key witness before the Committee of the Privy Council which Pitt set up in 1788.

In our generation we desperately need committed evangelical Christians in every area of public life. We need those who will tackle long term the anti-Christian morality now being written into our legislation whereby heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles are viewed as equally valid.<sup>89</sup> We need Christians who will tackle the blind spots that seem amongst many to be about as total as the eighteenth century attitude to slavery, especially the scandal of the abortion of unborn human beings. Since the 1967 Abortion Act as many or more have been killed by abortion as died in the Nazi Holocaust. And unborn children have no successors to call for apologies and reparation.

In an article in *The Church of England Newspaper*,<sup>90</sup> Catherine Fox asked of Newton and the slave trade: "How could Newton not have noticed the shocking truth? The Lord had promised good to him while people were rotting in chains just yards beneath his feet. Surely the implications of the Gospel must have been plain to him?" To Catherine Fox "this makes singing *Amazing Grace* a very tricky business." (She thinks, surely incorrectly, that Newton wrote that hymn *before* becoming a slave trader). Her conscience is eased by adapting Anglican Article XXVI: "The grace of Christ isn't rendered any less effective by the sinfulness of the hymn

writer". But in each generation, blind spots are just that, and they can affect Christians unless minds are more fully enlightened by the Word of God.

To be fair, Catherine Fox continues: "It occurred to me ... that Newton holding services on deck was a good metaphor for us the affluent west. We sail on, while just below our feet is the poverty and enforced labour of millions, yet we manage to edit it out." This is an entirely fair and significant point; but I return to the stark and tragic parallel between the slave trade and abortion. Many, including Christians, will daily work within or travel close to hospitals or clinics, where – also daily – unborn life is terminated. And perhaps with never a thought.

## 9. Newton's marriage

With the marriage of Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton in the seventeenth century, Hudson Taylor and Maria Dyer in the nineteenth, and C.S.Lewis and Joy Davidman Gresham in the twentieth, the marriage of John Newton and Mary Catlett in the eighteenth has its rightful place in the romantic annals of the people of God. We shall never know exactly what it was that caused 17 year old John to fall head over heels in love with 13 year old Mary (Polly) when Newton called for the first time on the Catletts, old family friends, on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1742. Perhaps in some way, young though she was, she reminded him of his mother. For love of her Newton became a naval deserter, but love of her almost certainly kept him alive when "all at sea" in the seven years before they married.

No doubt they worked at their marriage, as all need to do. Interestingly, it was Polly who first suggested they should pray aloud together – with John of course taking the lead!<sup>91</sup>

Newton's chief complaint was his fear that the strength of his love for her would usurp the primacy of his love for the Lord. "Newton's extreme and undisguised attachment used to puzzle some of his friends 'as she seemed to have few or any attractions'. They were obvious enough to him, for she was a dream wife and he had never woken from the dream".<sup>92</sup>

They cherished one another through good health and bad. They practised hospitality. Having no children of their own, they gladly adopted two orphaned nieces, Eliza Cunningham and Betsy Catlett. Along with the joy of having children to care for, there was a spiritual concern: Newton wrote in his diary concerning Betsy "Oh may He by His grace adopt her into His chosen family".<sup>93</sup> He did, and Betsy cared for Newton in old age.

He suffered with Polly during her two final years of illness before she died on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1790, and he preached at her funeral on Habakkuk 3:17-18. Newton shows us that unselfish self-giving Christian love in marriage can bring spiritual maturity and can spill over into a particular richness in Christian service that our generation may not often see or experience. Jonathan Aitken describes it as "a union of romance, prayer, service and joy". He continues "Household servants were also regarded as part of the Newton family. It was a Christian home and marriage which set an outstanding example in its time and to posterity".<sup>94</sup>

## 10. Newton's leadership

Leadership in the church of God is made in heaven and sadly not always reflected in so-called ecclesiastical hierarchies on earth. Newton spent his entire ministry as curate of one parish and then rector of another, but he was undoubtedly

the most significant leader amongst Anglican evangelicals and beyond in the final part of the eighteenth century. Others saw in him a leader raised up by God.

It was not his dramatic early years, but the man God in his grace made of him, that led to Newton becoming a recognised leader. "My connections have enlarged – my little name is spread" he wrote soon after arriving at St. Mary Woolnoth. Despite only two years' formal education, Newton comes across as someone with a sharp if not always original mind. He was seen as a man with clear biblical and theological convictions, but one who held his views eirenenically, who reached out to all who shared his Gospel priorities. He was an able and in some areas a quite exceptional all-rounder.

His godly influence was further forwarded in London through the Eclectic Society. Founded in 1783, the Society was "for discussion of religious truths and mutual improvement". Note that from the start this included "clergy from the established church, dissenting ministers and laymen".<sup>95</sup> An example of Newton's ongoing influence is John Stott's revival of the Eclectics in the early years of his own ministry.<sup>96</sup>

His influence on the next generation of evangelicals was considerable (on Simeon for example<sup>97</sup>) and on pioneer missionaries, such as William Carey and Henry Martyn.

Behind the scenes, remember Newton the leader was ever a man of personal prayer. Jonathan Aitken's verdict is: "The secret of Newton's relationship with God was his prayer life ... The theology of his prayer life – giving glory to the sovereign God; struggling to obey and suffer with the crucified Christ; and confiding in his Heavenly Father with

the heartfelt penitence of a sinner, combined to create a holy relationship between the giver and hearer of prayer.”<sup>98</sup>

Evangelical historians agree on Newton’s significance. For example, Skewington Wood: “For 28 years Newton delivered the evangelical message from this strategic pulpit (St. Mary Woolnoth) and did perhaps more than any other to commend the cause.”<sup>99</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith: “John Newton was not only one of the most remarkable evangelical leaders: but arguably one of the most remarkable men in the whole history of the Church of England”.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

As he grew old with his powers declining, Newton could not contemplate ceasing from ministry unless compelled to do so. To Richard Cecil he said: “Shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?”<sup>101</sup>

Josiah Bull said: “It was his *goodness* rather than his *greatness* that rendered him so especially attractive – the abundance of the grace of God that was in him ... Some men excel in one virtue more than another; but Mr Newton’s character was beautiful in its entirety.”<sup>102</sup> Hagiography is never in place and disputes over words inappropriate; but the grace that saved Newton and worked goodness into his character, surely also made him great – great in ministry and leadership in his own generation, and great in example and inspiration for the centuries to come.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 291
- <sup>2</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 292
- <sup>3</sup> Bull, p. 356
- <sup>4</sup> Foreword to Rouse (ed.), *365 Days with Newton*
- <sup>5</sup> Edwards, p. 350
- <sup>6</sup> *Authentic Narrative*, intro. Hindmarsh, p. 14
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p. 12
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p. 20
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.* p. 33
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p. 63
- <sup>11</sup> Pollock quotes Newton as saying his aim was to "talk, preach and reason with them, and explain the Scriptures to them in their own little way." Pollock continues: "He taught them plenty of hymns; he shrewdly instituted a system of rewards for knowledge and good behaviour: but it was his manner and affection, and not least his sea stories which drew them." Pollock, p. 154
- <sup>12</sup> *Authentic Narrative*, intro. Hindmarsh p. 64
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p. 69
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p. 71
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 88
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 65
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 25
- <sup>18</sup> Introduction to *Letters*, Banner of Truth edition, 1960
- <sup>19</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 72
- <sup>20</sup> Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 237
- <sup>21</sup> *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 199
- <sup>22</sup> Newton's theological pastoring of John Ryland is unfolded by Hindmarsh, pp. 142-159
- <sup>23</sup> *Authentic Narrative*, intro. Hindmarsh, p. 94
- <sup>24</sup> William Jay, *Autobiography*, reprinted Banner of Truth, 1974, p. 285
- <sup>25</sup> Printed for the John Newton Project from the ms. in Lambeth Palace Library by M. Rouse, 2001

- <sup>26</sup> *Miscellaneous Thoughts* (A5 edition), p. 9
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid.* p. 12
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 28
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p. 29
- <sup>30</sup> *Authentic Narrative*, intro. Hindmarsh, p. 64
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p. 94
- <sup>32</sup> Pollock, p. 32
- <sup>33</sup> Pollock, p. 33
- <sup>34</sup> *Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 3-58
- <sup>35</sup> Pollock, p. 155
- <sup>36</sup> John H. Pratt, *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders*, reprinted Banner of Truth 1978, p. 20
- <sup>37</sup> Pollock, p. 155
- <sup>38</sup> Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 201
- <sup>39</sup> Jay, *Autobiography*, p. 272
- <sup>40</sup> Piper, p. 64
- <sup>41</sup> Edwards, p. 287
- <sup>42</sup> Piper, p. 67
- <sup>43</sup> See Newton's letter to Henry Venn, Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 199
- <sup>44</sup> *Works*, Vol. 4
- <sup>45</sup> Extracts from the notebooks are very helpfully combined with Newton's hymns and extracts from his letters.
- <sup>46</sup> Bull, p. 368
- <sup>47</sup> *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 141
- <sup>48</sup> Hindmarsh, pp. 221-239
- <sup>49</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 198; Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 132
- <sup>50</sup> See Wallace Benn, *The Baxter Model*, Orthos booklet 13, Fellowship of Word and Spirit 1993
- <sup>51</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 206
- <sup>52</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 203
- <sup>53</sup> Edwards, p. 210
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- <sup>55</sup> *ibid.* p. 27
- <sup>56</sup> *ibid.* p. 87
- <sup>57</sup> See Introduction by J.E. Marshall to Scott 1984, and biographical summary in Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 324
- <sup>58</sup> Lord David Cecil, *The Stricken Deer*, Constable, reprinted 1933, p. 133

- <sup>59</sup> Dr. Gaius Davies, *Genius, Grief and Grace*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Christian Focus, 2001: ch. 3 Darkness into Light: William Cowper
- <sup>60</sup> John Piper, *Tested by Fire*, IVP 2001, ch. 2 Insanity and Spiritual Songs in the life of William Cowper, p. 95
- <sup>61</sup> Edwards, p. 323
- <sup>62</sup> Hindmarsh, pp. 243-256
- <sup>63</sup> Balleine, p. 84
- <sup>64</sup> *ibid.* p. 84
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid.* p. 84
- <sup>66</sup> *Life and Spirituality of John Newton*, intro. Hindmarsh, pp. 95-III; *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 197-217
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid.* p. 7
- <sup>68</sup> *ibid.* p. 8
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid.* p. 9
- <sup>70</sup> *Letters of William Still*, Banner of Truth, 1984
- <sup>71</sup> "Bash": *A Study in Spiritual Power*, ed. John Eddison, Marshalls, 1983
- <sup>72</sup> *ibid.* p. 58
- <sup>73</sup> Newton's hymns are discussed by Robin Leaver in *Churchman* 1979/4 and 1980/1, and in Hindmarsh ch. 7
- <sup>74</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 264; and Tim Shenton, *The Iron Pillar: William Romaine*, Evangelical Press, 2004
- <sup>75</sup> Leaver, *Churchman*, 1979/4, p. 332
- <sup>76</sup> See *365 Days with Newton*, Jan. 1-4
- <sup>77</sup> *Olney Hymns*, Book 2, 64
- <sup>78</sup> *ibid.* Preface, p. viii
- <sup>79</sup> *ibid.* Preface, p. vii
- <sup>80</sup> Hindmarsh, p. 268
- <sup>81</sup> Wolffe, p. 130
- <sup>82</sup> *Authentic Narrative*, intro. Hindmarsh, p. 88
- <sup>83</sup> Martin, p. 207
- <sup>84</sup> Pollock, *Wilberforce*, Constable, 1977, p. 38. Pollock has also produced a summary account of Newton's and Wilberforce's roles in the abolition of the slave trade in *Abolition!*, Day One, 2007
- <sup>85</sup> *Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 519-548
- <sup>86</sup> *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 548
- <sup>87</sup> Printed for the John Newton Project from the mss. in the Bodleian library, Oxford, by M. Rouse, 2002
- <sup>88</sup> Letter 49, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1795

<sup>89</sup> Our debt to organisations such as The Christian Institute is enormous.

<sup>90</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007

<sup>91</sup> Pollock, p. 114

<sup>92</sup> Pollock, p. 178

<sup>93</sup> Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 273

<sup>94</sup> Aitken, p. 272

<sup>95</sup> Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 200; and see J.H. Pratt *The Thought of the*

*Evangelical Leaders*, reprinted Banner of Truth 1978

<sup>96</sup> Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, IVP, 1999, pp. 305-308

<sup>97</sup> See Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge*, Hodder, 1977

<sup>98</sup> Aitken, p. 273

<sup>99</sup> Skevington Wood, p. 208

<sup>100</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, p. 37

<sup>101</sup> Cecil, ed. Rouse, p. 164

<sup>102</sup> Bull, p. 363

## ST. ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP CHARITY LECTURES

In or about 1560 the parish of St. Antholin, now absorbed into what is the parish of St. Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside and St Mary Alderbury, within the Cordwainer's Ward in the City of London, came into the possession of certain estates known as the "Lecturer's Estates". These were, it is believed, purchased with funds collected at or shortly after the date of the Reformation for the endowment of lectures of the Puritanical School of Divinity.

The first mention of the charity was an indenture, dated 24 June 1616, made between Richard Vane of the first part, the churchwardens of the parish of St. Antholin of the second part, and certain parishioners of the said parish of the third part.

Over the centuries the funds were not always used for the stated purpose, and in the first part of the nineteenth century a scheme was drawn up which revived the lectureship, which was to consist of forty lectures to be given three times a year on the Puritan School of Divinity, the lecturer to receive one guinea per lecture. A further onerous requirement was that the lecturer had to be a beneficed Anglican, living within one mile of the Mansion House in the City of London.

Under such conditions the lectureship fell into disuse a long time ago, and it was not until 1987 that moves were put in hand with the Charity Commissioners to update the scheme. The first lecture under the new scheme was given in 1991.

Trustees: Sir Timothy Hoare

The Reverend W.T. Taylor

The Reverend M.E. Burkill

## ST. ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP CHARITY LECTURES

- 1991 *A Man for All Ministries: Richard Baxter 1651-1691*, J.I.Packer
- 1992 *The Recovery and Renewal of the Local Church – the Puritan Vision*, Geoffrey Cox
- 1993 *Evangelical Spirituality – Past Glories – Present Hopes – Future Possibilities*, Alister E. McGrath
- 1994 *“But We Preach Christ Crucified”: The Cross of Christ in the Pastoral Theology of John Owen*, Gavin J. McGrath
- 1995 *Using the Shield of Faith – Puritan Attitudes to Combat with Satan*, Peter Jensen
- 1996 *An Anglican to Remember – William Perkins: Puritan Popularizer*, J.I.Packer
- 1997 *Pilgrim's Progress and Contemporary Evangelical Piety*, Bruce Winter
- 1998 *A Church ‘Halfy Reformed’ – the Puritan Dilemma*, Peter Adam
- 1999 *The Pilgrim's Principles: John Bunyan Revisited*, J.I.Packer
- 2000 *Conversion to Communion: Thomas Cranmer on a Favourite Puritan Theme*, Ashley Null
- 2001 *Word and Spirit: The Puritan-Quaker Debate*, Peter Adam
- 2002 *Usher on Bishops: A Reforming Ecclesiology*, Wallace Benn
- 2003 *Strangers to Correction: Christian Discipline and the English Reformation*, Peter Ackroyd
- 2004 *“Decalogue” Dod and his Seventeenth Century Bestseller: A Four Hundredth Anniversary Appreciation*, David Field
- 2005 *A Puritan Theology of Preaching*, Chad B. Van Dixhoorn
- 2006 *“To Bring Men to Heaven by Preaching” – John Donne's Evangelistic Sermons*, Peter Adam
- 2007 *1807 – 2007: John Newton and the Twenty-first Century*, Tony Baker